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Last fall, high winds did \$3000 worth of damage to the wheel and tail of a 12-foot mill down on the highway. I know part of the history of that windmill. The Texas Highway Department paid Grandfather Noelke's estate to put in the watering in 1934 to compensate for the land cut off by the new highway. In the drouth of the Fifties, the well had to be deepened from 285 feet to 305 feet. A fumble-headed cable tool driller jackknifed the tower lowering it to the ground.

The Big Boss and myself spent a week borrowing sections of tower legs and braces from our neighbor's wrecked windmills. Best I can remember, the well driller assuaged his sorrow for dropping the tower by fishing in the dirt tank, waiting for the Boss and myself to find windmill parts.

At the time the storm hit last fall, the windmill watered 60 head of sheep and one saddle horse. All the cattle had been moved the year before because of the drouth. When the mill went down, the tank had enough water to last the sheep and the horse nine months.

On 60 nine-pound fleeces at sixty cents a pound and 60 head of 70-pound lambs at 80 cents, \$3000 amortizes to a payoff date in the year 2075. The added worth of \$25 a day for the horse, using the rent day workers charge on their mounts, might pay for the paper and pencil lead to figure the deal.

The way I found the incentive to repair the mill was to estimate the cost of replacing the same size tank, the same amount of water troughs, and the same depth and mill size. Including clearing off the brush and bedding the tanks and water troughs, the grand total came to \$37,000.

Now, this wasn't going to be a deep well. Off the big draw going west toward the Goat Whisker's outfit, the Trinity sand is a little over 300 feet deep, or right on the border of what a 12-foot mill will lift, but more in the range of a 14-foot mill. Electricity was no longer an option. Due to the uncertainty over deregulation, the REA stopped running feeder lines to well locations.

Instead, the co-op offers solar panels at \$14,000 big enough to run an electric pump. The panels, I understand, last for 10 years. Sunshine is a very reliable power source in the shortgrass country. Given big enough solar panels, we could blow all the transformers in a city twice the size of Houston and have enough extra voltage to short out Galveston.

The sun is so strong out here in July, we have to use a number 15 sunscreen inside the house to keep from burning from the reflection off the window panes. Thirty years ago, the citizens grew tired of pictures of frying eggs on the sidewalk. Heat waves so severe as to warp railroad rails might make the fourth page of a daily. Hailstones big enough to knock down rock fences might win the floor at the coffee

house. But I don't think anyone ever listened when I mentioned the wind tearing up a windmill wheel.

One of my neighbors had an old style wheel on the ground. He's a hardheaded old dickens. He descends from a line of Englishmen having domes so hard they'd make a piece of Central Texas granite seem soft as a mush melon. But from long experience and practice, he knows how to be a good neighbor and sure knows about ranch and windmill disasters.

The classification "old style," however, turned out to be tricky. The Aermotor people, going back into the 1890s, eventually manufactured the first self-oiling windmill and the first tail to turn the wheel out of high winds. I wasn't able to find why there are two models of wheels, "old, old style" and "old style." I don't guess the Aermotor people realized we were going to be patching on their product into a new century way after parts were out of stock.

But as it ended up, my neighbor had the wrong model. Kind of left a bad taste in my mouth when I realized he was only in on the deal to the extent of his one odd-sized windmill wheel. Never knew him to draw light on a deal before. Had he pitched in 500 bucks it'd have helped a whole lot.

Where the digging is dirt or caliche, pipelines hooked into submersible pumps are the best solution. Windmills are still good for weak wells and remote locations. Used to take two generations to fence and water a ranch. I don't think that formula will work anymore. The way waterings cost and

fence builders charge, we may be heading back to the days of open range and open river-front...